

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 001579

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2013

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TWO MURDERS, THREATS SHAKE ISTANBUL JEWISH COMMUNITY

Classified By: Consul General David L. Arnett for reasons 1.5 (d).

1. (C) Summary: A recent extortion campaign against members of a Jewish retirement home's board of directors has shaken Istanbul's Jewish community. One of the board members, Yasef Yahya, was killed on August 22 at his office. Starting three weeks ago, other members of the board have been contacted with demands for large sums of money. Another Jewish businessman, Mois Konur, was killed on October 8, in what appears to be an unrelated incident. Police believe the killings were criminal rather than political. End Summary.

Retirement Home Killing and Extortion

2. (U) On August 22, a 39-year-old Jewish dentist, Yasef Yahya, was killed in his office in Sisli, in central European Istanbul. Yahya was a member of the board of directors of a Jewish retirement home, a member of B'nai Brith, and a regular attendee at the Haskoy synagogue. According to press reports, Yahya was killed "execution style," with a single bullet to the head. Police report that Yahya was found with a woman's stocking stuffed in his mouth, and his briefcase and cell phone were missing. However, Yahya's wallet, containing TL 43 million (USD 31) and his watch were still on the body.

3. (C) Starting on September 26, another member of the board of directors of the same retirement home, Jaki (or Zeki) Kaziz began receiving threatening phone calls. In conversation with Lina Filiba, Vice President of the Jewish Community's Lay Council, Poloff learned that calls were all made from a single cell phone number (90-555-512-4765). Kaziz was told that he had to pay one million euros, later reduced to USD 500,000. As a means of showing how serious he was, the caller told Kaziz to look at "yahya2010@hotmail.com," using password "5555." According to Filiba, in the e-mails were personal details about Yahya, including credit card numbers. Several threatening e-mails came from "efraim@hotmail.com."

4. (C) Threatening calls were also made to the office of the president of the retirement home board, Yasar Natan. Natan recently died, however, and his son spoke with the caller. Again, the caller made threats and demanded USD 500,000. Filiba said a third member of the board was contacted at home, and the caller said his name was "Murat Velioğlu."

5. (C) The Jewish Community has shared all information with the Istanbul police regarding this case. All families of the retirement home board members are now in hiding, and change residence weekly. Jewish Community Lay Council President Bensiyon Pinto has spoken directly with both the Minister of the Interior and PM Erdogan about the case. The Israeli Consul General was also informed of the situation.

Caterer killed

6. (C) Meanwhile, in an apparently unrelated incident, Mois Konur, a 29-year-old caterer was killed while walking on the street on October 8. According to Jewish Community contacts, Konur may have had past interaction with organized crime in Turkey, possibly including unpaid debts. Konur's family was unaware of any prior threats to him or of the retirement home case in general. While Israeli and French press have reportedly linked the two killings, Jewish Community contacts, and the Istanbul police, believe they are separate.

Pattern of Anti-Jewish Violence?

7. (C) In a discussion following the death of Yahya with

other Jewish small business owners, some community members noted that it is not uncommon for Jewish small business owners to be threatened, particularly by "MHP supporter types." Small time threats for protection money are "common for our doctors," according to Filiba. However, small business owners noted in the same conversation that similar threats do occur with their Turkish colleagues as well.

Comment

18. (C) At this point, the cases appear to involve extortion and organized crime. Post will continue to monitor them, however, and report if any linkage to larger political motivations or groups which may have an anti-semitic agenda is discovered.
ARNETT